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MACAULAY UP TO DATE

When, two years ago, Mr. Charles M. Schwab startled the country with the opinion that, 'The time would soon arrive when the men of the working class—the men without property—would control the destinies of the world,' the chief ground of interest was doubtless found in the fact that it emanated from a man like Mr. Schwab, rather than in any concern about the opinion itself. Yet Mr. Schwab's very position as a successful manager of labor gave importance to his words. He saw clearly the trend of events. He was alive even at that time to the fact that with labor well employed at better wages than ever before and living under better conditions than had ever before existed, the spirit of unrest was steadily growing.

The eminent authority on steel not only realized that the laborer is worthy of his hire and should be paid to the uttermost farthing, but he had also put a high premium on loyal service. The intensive effort created by this evidence of interest in the personal welfare of the individual worker had strengthened his splendid organization and produced marvelous results, and yet he had found that this does not satisfy the longing of the human heart. Individual opportunity is the thing desired, and for this, in a real democracy, there is no substitute.

Mr. Schwab had himself stepped from the ranks of ordinary toilers, and had moved on to the realization of his ambition and to the position of trust and importance for which he had by earnest application well fitted himself. Had he, however, not found an open door of opportunity, his career could never have been so successful.

There will always be a field in which men of genius may achieve prominence, but with the present tendency toward centralization of all industrial and commercial operations the chance of achievement is diminishing rather than increasing, and the greatest contributor to this result has been, perhaps, Mr. Schwab himself.

The conditions arising out of the stern realities caused by the application of the principles of modern industrial development have induced many people to run around in circles in search of

some remedy for their real or fancied evils. As an example of this we cite a little book by an English author entitled *Political Ideals*. Its style is appealing, its simplicity compelling. Much delightful philosophy, bearing upon the weakness of humanity, fills the reader with a stimulating expectancy that soon we shall emerge from the gloom of doubt into the bright light of truth, and find awaiting us a satisfying deliverance from many metaphysical complexities and economic uncertainties. But seductive aphorisms cease to charm the mental faculties, when the fathomless doctrine of Idealistic Socialism is revealed as the author's true purpose, and a feeling of disappointment inspires a reservation that remains to the end. The barren rocks of impracticability break through the mist and almost wreck the skiff in which we had embarked, and we find ourselves drifting amid the shallows of Socialism. We find it suggested that the control of railways should not rest with the State as a geographical authority, and still less ought it to be in the hands of a set of 'irresponsible capitalists.'

How these railways came into the hands of "irresponsible capitalists" is not disclosed. The fact is disregarded that the world's vast railway systems are the main arteries through which a nation's life-blood ebbs and flows, and that, in striking contrast to the inland seas and waterways, they are the products of industry and were not created by the wand of a fairy.

The writer next states: "The only true democratic system would be one which left the internal management of railways in the hands of the men who work on them. These men should elect the general manager and a parliament of directors, if necessary." This system, it is further suggested, should apply to other large trades, such as mining, iron, steel, cotton, and so on. Our versatile idealist here passes to other speculative fields, leaving the reader forced to descend to the common plane of ordinary eventualities that have stood the test of experience.

Attempts made from time to time to weave by mental process and to adopt by communal agreement, a system of general amelioration, have undoubtedly exercised, to some degree, a restraining influence upon those materialists who, since the beginning of time, have gathered the "loaves and fishes" with no thought

for the brethren; and the idealist who succeeds in being ideal must bring to his support a vivid imagination and some originality of thought, and so long as he vibrates in terms of ethereal uplift, even though he be unintelligible, he will have followers.

The varying aspects of Socialism, or what is called Socialism, now finding lodgment in the hearts of men have multiplied beyond human calculation. Accepting the Golden Rule as a gauge of conduct,—the socialism of which, by the way, in no wise conflicts with the fundamental law, “By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,”—we find, nevertheless, men everywhere striving to dwell in ease and comfort, living a parasitic life; evading responsibility and taxes; toiling not, yet seeking to enjoy the product of industry. We find, likewise, that Socialism has run mad and degenerated into the most vicious form of confiscation which dwarfs creative impulse and destroys constructive effort. So we have the proposition, advanced in all seriousness, that the railroads be turned over to the men employed in their operation, and that after a modest rental has been paid the owners of the property and a living wage to the employees, the profits (if any) shall be divided between the Government and the employees!

In the midst of these generously assorted, more or less destructive suggestions we observe certain large employers of labor announcing a plan to pay a minimum wage to all employees, regardless of their capacity, value, etc., in line with Henry Ford, who, in many respects, is the most dangerous figure in America's industrial life. This policy amounts to these concerns levying a tax upon the public in order to bestow largess upon their own employees, who are in number but a fraction of the country's population. The system is, in my opinion, unsound when measured by a philosophy that contemplates a correct conception of altruism and economic justice. This distorted viewpoint, adopted by well-meaning people, has been brought about by the widening gap between classes—affording opportunity for the professional demagogue to fan the flames of discontent among the improvident and derelict, counselling the correction of injustices through destructive measures, rather than by adopting helpful and constructive ideas of frugality and thrift, which lead to independence and ultimate contentment.

Closely following this interesting proposal, comes a suggestion from Dr. Charles W. Eliot, that industrial peace and prosperity to the nation can come only from a partnership agreement between capitol and labor, in which the profits from industrial activities, manufacturing, etc., shall be divided between owners of plants and employees, and the losses, if there be any, must be assumed by owners; as labor would have no assets from which to pay any losses that might accrue from business operation. Another potent influence in fostering the growth of the spirit of unrest that finds solace in degenerate Socialism is the system of exploitation whereby through unrestricted opportunity, swollen fortunes are amassed out of proportion to the prosperity of the working people, whose labor is a principal factor in creating this wealth, and who are the bulwark of society.

Where this state of affairs prevails for long, there will develop an autocracy that will become an effectual menace to permanent industrial peace. The nearest approach to the purchase on equitable terms of freedom from distrust and social disorder seems to be found in the plan growing in favor as its success becomes apparent, whereby large employers of labor encourage and assist their workmen to own stock and share in the fortunes of industry, establishing relations of proprietorship and co-partnership that become a bond of agreement and a safeguard against destructive tendencies. This admits to the business councils, on terms of equality, men from the ranks, whose advice is often of value to busy executives. These men, on their return to their labors, carry words of inspiration that strengthen the moral and economic fabric of the institution, whatever it may be. Socialism finds in this system a real germ of hope, a working plan of human betterment. There can, however, be no definite fulfillment of the higher aspirations of mankind until the democratic doctrine of "the greatest good to the greatest number" is more than a figure of speech to be used in song and oratory, but is made a part of the daily schedule of business relations.

The responsibility in these circumstances rests not on one side alone. Labor must share it by guarding with fidelity the avenues of progress through which have come upon the stage

in every branch of American industry, men who have risen from the ranks of honest toil. For these men, by energy, application and thrift, have become stalwart figures in the nation's life.

If, therefore, the working man is to have a share in the settlement of great issues, and the conduct of affairs, he must prepare himself to sit in the councils of the mighty and render the account of his stewardship which will be required of him at the Last Day. Otherwise, like Samson of old, he will pull down the pillars of the Temple and be crushed along with those he may seek to destroy.

Sixty-three years ago, at the age of 57, Lord Macaulay, then among the world's leading statesmen and thinkers, wrote a personal letter to Hon. Henry S. Randall, who had just published his *Life of Jefferson*. This letter, by reason of its unhappy prophecies, was not received in this country with glad acclaim, and does not appear in the generally published works of Macaulay. In the light of a warning, and for the purpose of enlivening the public conscience to the importance of giving timely consideration to impending dangers now indicated by things too obvious to be ignored, this letter is here presented as being germane to the foregoing discussion.

Taking into full account the material and spiritual progress of mankind since Macaulay's day, and the degree to which this progress can be relied upon as security against the fulfillment of such dire prophecy, one need but regard for what it is worth the failure of civilization to prevent the destruction of all that has made for progress, by the warring nations of Europe, where the modern Hun has surpassed in his inhuman debauchery anything to be found in recorded history.

HOLLY LODGE, KENSINGTON, LONDON,
May 23, 1857.

DEAR SIR:

You are surprised to learn that I have not a high opinion of Mr. Jefferson, and I am a little surprised at your surprise. I am certain that I never wrote a line, and that I never, in parliament, in conversation, or even on the hustings,—a place where it is the fashion to court the populace,—uttered a word indicating an opinion that the supreme authority in a State ought to be entrusted to the majority of the citizens

told by the hand; in other words, to the poorest and most ignorant part of society.

I have long been convinced that institutions purely democratic must sooner or later, destroy liberty or civilization, or both.

In Europe, where the population is dense, the effect of such institutions would be almost instantaneous. What happened lately in France is an example. In 1848 a pure democracy was established there. During a short time there was reason to expect a general spoliation, a national bankruptcy, a new partition of the soil, a maximum of prices, a ruinous load of taxation, laid on the rich for the purpose of supporting the poor in idleness. Such a system would, in twenty years, have made France as poor and barbarous as the France of the Carolingians. Happily the danger was averted; and now there is a despotism, a silent tribune, an enslaved press. Liberty is gone; but civilization has been saved. I have not the smallest doubt that, if we had a purely democratic government here, the effect would be the same. Either the poor would plunder the rich, and civilization would perish, or order and prosperity would be saved by a strong military government, and liberty would perish.

You may think that your country enjoys an exemption from these evils. I will frankly own to you that I am of a very different opinion. Your fate I believe to be certain, though it is deferred by a physical cause. As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the old world; and while that is the case, the Jeffersonian policy may continue to exist without causing any fatal calamity. But the time will come when New England will be as thickly populated as Old England. Wages will be as low, and will fluctuate as much with you as with us. You will have your Manchesters and Birminghams; and, in those Manchesters and Birminghams hundreds of thousands of artisans will assuredly be sometimes out of work. Then your institutions will be fairly brought to the test. Distress everywhere makes the laborer discontented and mutinous and inclines him to listen with eagerness to agitators who tell him that it is monstrous iniquity that one man should have a million while another cannot get a full meal. In bad years there is plenty of grumbling here and sometimes a little rioting. But it matters little. For here the sufferers

are not the rulers. The supreme power is in the hands of a class, numerous indeed, but select, of an educated class, of a class which is, and knows itself to be, deeply interested in the security of property and the maintenance of order. Accordingly the malcontents are firmly, but gently, restrained. The bad time is got over without robbing the wealthy to relieve the indigent. The springs of national prosperity soon begin to flow again; work is plentiful; wages rise; and all is tranquillity and cheerfulness. I have seen England pass three or four times through such critical seasons as I have described.

Through such seasons the United States will have to pass, in the course of the next century, if not of this. How will you pass through them? I heartily wish you a good deliverance. But my reason and my wishes are at war, and I cannot help foreboding the worst.

It is quite plain that your government will never be able to restrain a distressed and discontented majority. For with you the majority is the government, and has the rich, who is always a minority, absolutely at its mercy. The day will come when in the State of New York a multitude of people, none of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith. On the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne and to ride in a carriage while thousands of honest folk are in want of necessities. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a workingman who hears his children cry for more bread? I seriously apprehend that you will, in some such season as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity returning; that you will act like a people who should in a year of scarcity, devour all the seed-corn, and thus make the next year a year, not of scarcity, but of absolute famine. There will be, I fear, spoliation. The spoliation will increase the distress. The distress will produce fresh spoliation. There is nothing to stop you.

Your constitution is all sail and no anchor. As I said before, when a society has entered on this downward progress either civilization or liberty must perish. Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with

a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth,—with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals, who ravaged the Roman Empire, came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions.

Thinking thus, of course, I cannot reckon Jefferson among the benefactors of mankind. I readily admit that his intentions were good and his abilities considerable. Odious stories have been circulated about his private life, but I do not know on what evidence those stories rest; and I think it probable that they are false, or monstrously exaggerated. I have no doubt that I shall derive both pleasure and information from your account of him.

I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

Your faithful servant,

(Signed) T. B. MACAULAY.

If Lord Macaulay were living to-day and were to review the happenings of the past four years, taking into account the part the United States has played in the world war, it would be interesting to know how he would regard the American Ship of State and its Constitution.

The changes in class conditions that have taken place in England since 1914, have swept from beneath his feet the ground upon which he stood in 1857. That he would reaffirm his apprehension in some particulars is reasonably certain. Doubtless he would "view with alarm" situations that now seem drawing near.

The manner in which organized labor capitalized the nation's war necessities, insisting upon concessions at the hands of the bureaucratic war machine, in most instances, and obtaining all that was demanded, has left the country in a state of socialistic paternalism of which its founders never dreamed.

The popular practice of playing politics resorted to by men elected to places of high responsibility, and by those seeking political preferment, has weakened the government's position in dealing with problems more serious than any that have heretofore confronted the nation, surpassing in gravity those of the dark days of the Civil War. Thus while standing erect and

receiving with pardonable pride the plaudits of the nations of the world, after having stood as the hope of civilization in the crucial hour when Liberty was visibly tottering on her throne, and having joined hands with England and France to put down the same Huns and Vandals who ravished the Roman Empire, it would be well to put on the garments of humility that go with true greatness and view with soberness Lord Macaulay's suggestion—"That your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions."

A. R. DEARBORN.

Birmingham, Ala.